

Communicating Words and More: A study of oral traditions of Radh Bengal (including the districts of Purulia, West Mednipur and Bankura)

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Abstract: The paper looks into the oral traditions in the form of anecdotes, riddles, poems and stories from the Radh region of the state of West Bengal, comprising of the districts of West Mednipur, Bankura and Purulia. Geographically, the expanse is composed of red laterite soil and is an extension of the Chhotanagpur plateau region. The work portrays an analysis of historical representation of data through the collection of a vast amount of folklore from the region. These not only help to ascertain a reflection of a rich tradition transmitted through generations, but also help portray the cognitive representation of socio-cultural and religious developments through history which serve as important contexts for their origination. Their survival itself is a testimony to this, a testimony conveyed, communicated and transferred through time.

*Sarva srehshta hai gaja jar sahodar
Tahar bahan jeba diba andhabor
Nai budh majhe jeba bharater rajan
Je tarute sedhechhilen bhuter sadhan
Ei dui milonete je palli hoi
Sei khanate bari mor janibe nischoi*

(The almighty elephant is the beloved friend
The famous *vahana* who is blind during daytime)

That has the king of the nation
 Who performed a meditation under the tree
 The village which is named after these two
 Remember, my home is there)

With a ring in his tone and a sparkle in his eyes as the village riddle sparked off a question, it is more than a mere simple answer that met my eyes. Sitting under a setting sun and across the courtyard of a wizened old man in the village of PENCHASHIMUL (Bankura district, West Bengal¹); I could see what my probe into the meaning of the name of the village entailed. It led to a euphoric exploration of a venerable tradition that is partly lost in oblivion under the pressures of modern civilization. The *chhara*² in the form of a riddle is not a lone example in the region of Radh Bengal. Imparting a sense into exploring the surrounding milieu, mainly consisting of rows of *Simul* tree (Red Silk Cotton Tree³) bordering the entrance and exit of the village, such examples of oral tradition is still vibrant amidst the recent times of global communication in Radh Bengal and seem to do justice in more ways than one as they survive within niches and crannies of the houses of a few handful of village elders. With the hooting of owls amidst *simul* trees heralding the settling of dusk during the flowering season between January to March, the age-old effusive *chhara* seems to be a verbose referring to a custom that talks about a continuous tradition of survival of ethnic identity amidst changing socio-cultural and religious contexts. The name of the village quite simply denotes the prominent combination of a *pencha* or owl, the *simul* flower and the *chhara*, as is evident with most village riddles, poems, fables and other aspects of oral tradition, especially in the region of study, was only limited to a handful of village elders. The youngsters of the sparsely populated village failed to recall even a single line, though readily agreed to the existence of a certain riddle explaining the name of the village.

Over the last few decades, the significance of folklore and oral tradition has been explored in various ways, with different theories and debates across the globe imparting significance to varied aspects of the discipline. The focus gradually shifted from a mere analytical inquiry to a closer survey of the reason behind formulation of various oral tradition and attempts at understanding the cognitive behavior that may have given rise to specific contexts. The region under study of West Bengal though has experienced similar extensive surveys, investigations and enquiries into the domain of folk studies for over a century, yet remains mostly enshrined within the parameters of the conventional mode of studying the discipline, consisting mainly of collection of data. This has nevertheless resulted in the accumulation of a colossal amount of

information and mention may be made of the attempts of Lal Behari Dey, Dakkhinaranjan Mitra Majumdar, Dinesh Chandra Sen, William McCulloch, Rabindranath Tagore and others. However, mostly all of these data were limited in nature with the exclusion of further scrutiny of contexts, causes and implications. Nevertheless, it is also significant to mention that each and every of these attempts also provided a rich source of study for future reference works and researches, acting as the mainstay, strength and support for various studies of varied disciplines including, folk culture, linguistics, sociology, philosophy and literature. Most of these data collected from the region, over the last century, are generally in the form of fables, folklore, poems and riddles. At closer observation, they can be further divided between eastern and western Bengal, with the former constituting a significant section of the erstwhile eastern Bengal or most parts of the country of Bangladesh and the latter was formed of prominent parts of modern western Bengal, including the erstwhile Jangalmahal - constituting parts of modern Jharkhand and parts of Orissa and also the present region of study—the Radh region. Geo-physical constituents made the two regions differ in nature, flora and fauna with the former being more fertile and well-drained, fed by both perennial and non-perennial rivers and the latter forming sections of a more arid region of the Chhotanagpur plateau. Difference in landscapes naturally evoke an image of diverse habitation, however interestingly enough, the folklore in the form of fables, riddles and poems, contained a continuous strain, which spoke of the proximity of the regions and also the remarkable possibilities of their traveling from one region to another. With a history of varied religious influences, including Jainism, Tantric Buddhism, Vaisnavism, Saivism, Saktaism, Brahmanism, Islam and finally Christianity, the region under study experienced various changes in thought processes, political scenarios and cultural affiliations. As the larger representation portrayed motley of heterogeneous and diverse socio-cultural elements, it is also important to mention about the minor depiction in the form of ethnic identities. This was prominent through the importance of folk divinities and deities and local ruling authorities, which helped to strengthen the native history to a great extent. The present paper focuses on this character and distinctiveness of the region, which helped to shape the regional socio-cultural and religious ethos. The paper looks into a brief history of the region which influenced the local religious belief structure and in turn also influenced the local lore and fables that exist today as a mode of continuous human communication between existing societies and religions. Amidst this, ecology occupies a significant pivotal role, aiding the diachronic development of thought processes down the path of history. The study was conducted in the three districts of Purulia, Bankura and West Mednipur in Radh region

from 2004 to 2010. The lore mainly embodies the autochthones/*vratyas* of the region and is inextricably associated with the religious beliefs and ideas of the region. The significance of folklore of the region also lies in its tradition, which speaks of a parallel belief structure alongside the mainstream - so-called Brahminical religious belief system in the region - which has oft been repeated in the writings of historians and linguists like Niharranjan Ray, Suniti K. Chattopadhyay and others. The lore is helpful in not only understanding the settlement patterns, migrations and change of habitation, reflection of day-to-day activities and anxieties concerning livelihood, but also reflects a story of continuous struggle for acceptance within a framework of society, which, historically speaking, has been dominated by sections of higher caste with the *vratyas* occupying a secondary role down the path of regional history.

The region under study

Archaeological records provide vital information pertaining to settlement pattern of the region in relation to the local inhabitants from the very early times, however, it is not until the Historical/Late Historical periods, that information pertaining to religious as well as developing economic activities are available. Though no records mention the religion and religious ceremonies/festivities of the autochthones/*vratyas*, yet, a glimpse of this is available from the various records pertaining to the trade and commerce of the region, as well as the religions patronised by the local royalty, both of which had everlasting effects on the religion of the autochthones. However, the origin of fables and lore is difficult to measure nevertheless, and cannot be studied with historical references till later times.

Socially, the assimilation of Hindu and Buddhist ideals and principles had already prepared the ground for a certain pattern of religious beliefs in Bengal, much before Buddhism was formally taken as a state religion under the rule of the Pala kings. This is a significant process, which can be associated through the words of N.K. Bose (1959:9), as he mentioned “gave rise in later times in Bengal to a number of unorthodox sects, in which the human body itself is treated as the mystic temple of God...it had its origin in the treatment of humanity as the highest value, in contrast to Vedic ritualdom.” Through time, the religious traditions of the *vratyas* assimilated within the orthodox order of the Puranic Brahminical religious traditions and the latter also borrowed from time to time from the former, giving rise to a peculiarity of beliefs in the region of study (one can refer to the upward mobilisation i.e. universalisation and downward mobilization i.e. parochialisation here). The influence of Buddhism and Jainism also continued through time and found a way of expression through the folk festivals of the region.

The region under study experienced new settlers from outside, ousting the original inhabitants to the borderlands of hilly terrains and possibly absorbing them as labourers in agricultural fields under them. Different archaeological dates assign the arrival of new settlers in the plains of Bengal as against the pre-settled autochthones around 3rd to 4th century A.D. Though the dates require further postulation as Bengal mostly lacks specific and continuous chrono-cultural data, it can be postulated that the agricultural subsistence pattern of modern pre-industrial Bengal, basically goes back to this period. Thus, it can also be surmised that associated with the agrarian pattern and the mode of living, much part of the folk beliefs, rites and rituals could also have had their continuity from this time. Various evidences from history and archaeology impart information regarding the significance of folk festivals in the region, including the Asokan edicts of early historic age of Dhauli and Jaugad.⁴ From these Rock Edicts, it can be ascertained that even at the time of Asoka, there used to take place local festivals, which corresponded with the modern-day period of Tusu festival in the region. It is possible that the time the edicts were written, these harvesting festivals were already popular amidst the locals of the region (under different names) and Asoka merely mentioned this popular winter harvest festival in his composition. Similar information about royal influence and the propagation of royal religion is also assessed from the evidences of the Mahasthan Rock inscription, which also suggests the region of study to have been under the influence of the Magadhan empire and the Susunia rock inscription of Chandravarman of 4th century A.D. of Bankura, which suggests the earliest reference of Vaisnavism in the region. Further references of the influence and spread of Buddhism in the region is also obtained from the writings of Chinese pilgrims, including Fa-Hien, I-Tsing, Hiuen Tsang and others, especially in the regions of Pataliputra and Tamralipti and the rise of the port at Saptagram, especially from the time of late-Gupta age. However, apart from the literary evidences, the paucity of other epigraphical, historical and archaeological records of the intervening period between the Mahasthan rock edicts of Asoka and the Susunia rock inscription, till the Gupta age, makes it difficult to weave a continuous strain of history in the region of study, especially pertaining to the local inhabitants. The copper plate grants of the Gupta age provide certain information about local inhabitants as well as local chiefs. These speak about the purchase and sale of lands, unearthed from various places in Bengal ranging between mid-5th to 7th century A.D. In the socio-cultural scenario, there was much importance associated to local chiefs, which is known from the land grant unearthed from the village Mallasarul (Burdwan). This also helps to perceive the appearance

of small monarchies “emanated from new ruling families all of which emerged into history in what may have been peripheral areas of those times. Chronologically situated within the time-frame of the suzerain rule of the Gupta monarchs, they nevertheless represented the appearance of local monarchies from somewhat unascertainable backgrounds” (Chattopadhyay, 2005:182). Till the early medieval ages, the region also witnessed a spread of Buddhism, followed by Hinduism and the principles of Saktatism and Saivism. However, the religion of the masses continued alongside, existing often outside the peripheries of royal patronage and often assimilating thought processes of mainstream religious currents of the region.⁵ Throughout the time of the Early and Late historic periods, the religions of Jainism and Buddhism gained popularity through royal patronage, evident from the various relics of temples and idols, which are found till date, in scattered manners across the region of study and were also evident from the various villages studied under the present research. From the time of the medieval period onwards, most of the region also witnessed significant concentration of tribal religious traditions, with a reduction of rigidity of orthodox Pauranic Brahmanism and the rise of different religious influences like Bhakti/Chaitanya, Sufism, the emergence of several *pirs* as well as Tantrism, including the rise of neo-Vaisnavism and Saktatism.

The invasion of Islam had far reaching consequences on the history of Bengal. Finally, the Mughal conquest of Bengal was completed by Man Singh under Akbar. The later medieval ages had specific important episodes, which also left an everlasting impression on the oral tradition of the region, including the division of the region into various *chaklas* or local administrative units under the rule of Murshid Quli Khan and the attack and subsequent vigorous plundering of Maratha raiders - the Bargees.

The autochthones and the lores

The oral traditions, collected for the study are mainly in the form of stories, fables, riddles and poems. Though the origin of oral tradition is hard to ascertain in reference to historical developments, especially in relation to early and late historic periods, yet their association and possible period of origin can easily be understood from the time of late medieval period onwards in the region of study. Several stories, fables, anecdotes, riddles and poems revolve around the various local royalties, many of whom are still heralded with significance by the local inhabitants, including the Bishnupur Malla royal family of Bankura, the Panchkot royal family of Purulia, the Hadalnarayanpur royal family of Bankura and others. Several of the stories relate to the struggle of the survival of the royalty in later times under the British rule and many

others narrate the stories of furious struggle with Maratha Bargee raiders and their plunders of the region. Mainly associated with local divinities, all the stories narrate anecdotes of the miracles performed by deities to ward off all evil forces.

The oral traditions collected from the region can mainly be divided into two major segments. This also brings to mind close resemblance to the Tamil traditions of *akam:puram*, where the former can be stated to belong to inner quarters or home and the latter belonging to a wider audience in courts and temples. Of the large amount of folklore/oral traditions collected from the region of study, a distinct category had a much larger audience, which more often than not, also included mention of the local royalties. The other category was seen to be much limited in nature, which were popular within the village or within surrounding villages only. It is also interesting to note the association of these two categories of lore to the two distinct divisions of the autochthones or *vratyas* - the castes and the tribes. As the folklore associated to the former is for a much larger audience and is geographically popular over a large area, the folklore of the latter is limited in popularity with a single or few specific villages as mentioned above. It is also important to mention that the significance of the audience is immense, as it has helped to formulate the stories, fables and poems to follow a certain pattern down the path of history.

The wide gamut of lore concerning the scheduled castes of the region mainly consists of stories and anecdotes of local royalty on one hand and a majority section of fables which narrate the significance of the occupation of various scheduled castes. The ones revolving around royalty, generally, followed simple patterns of aiding and helping the masses in times of natural calamities or threats from external forces, including the Maratha Bargee raiders. The chronicles of occupation on the other hand are widely circulated and famous across the entire region. They revolve around so-called mainstream deities, including Siva, Parvati, Visnu/Krsna, Brahma, Viswakarma and others punishing and cursing different minor divinities or their offspring for mistakes unknowingly committed by various castes. They were then destined to be born as a low-caste person on earth and fated to follow a certain occupation. This was their only method of penitence and atonement for their misdeed. These occupations are varied, including an oil-presser, a hunter, tanner, washer man, nail cutter, hairdresser, barber, gardener, undertaker at crematoriums and others. Mostly, the stories are seen to follow certain simple patterns—

- The cursed persons were closely associated with the major deities. They were either their offspring or minor gods, who were considered close to the major deities.

- The duties or occupations of the castes in earth are always explained by their deeds in the heavens.
- The curse made them be reborn as a low-caste person on earth which is their only way of atonement.
- They are destined to worship the same deity who cursed them and in the process, the story is repeated again and again.
- The rites, rituals and offerings included within the worship follow the same trend of the worship of a deity in higher castes of the society, though at several instances, the officiating priest may include a non-Brahmin person and someone from their own caste, often referred to as the *Layek*.
- The stories were also seen to frequently refer to the local royalty being its follower which was often propelled by a mandate described in a dream.
- The stories narrate a possible close association of the scheduled castes with the so-called higher castes of the region as an indication of gradual historical development.

On the other hand, the second category of oral tradition concerning the autochthones included under tribe's category of the region is distinctly different in essence—bearing ethnic identity and symbolic representation of the cycles of life, death and the universe. The deities mentioned in the stories are all local folk deities and do not associate themselves with the stated mainstream deities. These stories also seem to follow certain simple patterns—

- The lore is limited within the tribe or specific villages.
- Simple explanations of the origin of universe, and thereby their initiation into the world of existence.
- The stories seldom adhere to explanations of reasons for being born or leading a certain form of life through hunting and gathering or pastoral nomadism.
- Simple explanations of the stories adhere to the notions of the main functions of life, birth, marriage and death.
- The folk deities are respected as the tribe or village deity and are pompously worshipped with sacrifices occupying a significant part of the rituals.
- The officiating priest is a person from the same tribe.
- They seldom refer to any mortal ruling authority as they consider themselves to be answerable to their gods alone.
- The stories do not specify any explanations of their close association with people of the so-called higher castes of the region.

Interestingly enough, certain features were also seen common between both the categories. Based on cognitive communication that could have possibly led to its birth in the first place, these can be cited as -

- Several of the stories were seen to be common across the three districts suggesting possible interaction between the inhabitants.
- Both signified the association to respective deities, making them attain the status of village gods or goddesses, with some of them being respected and revered across a large number of villages, like, Burha-Burhi, Marang Buru, Manasa, Sitala, various forms of Candi as well as Sini, among others.
- Thus, mostly the deities perform all activities generally associated with village deities, including guarding the village and its inhabitants against natural calamities, death and diseases, and also guarding the village peripheries against intruders.
- Thus, both were mainly concerned with the significance of angst and concerns related to livelihood, death, diseases and natural calamities.
- Both the categories were also inextricably associated with the cycle of regeneration and birth. Thus, occupying a special place of reverence associated to fertility, childbirth and reproduction.
- This also brings to mind the significance of *brata-kathas* or non-religious ceremonies, mainly centered on the womenfolk of the villages. Both types have a prevalence of *brata-katha* ceremonies observed throughout the year by women of various ages and across various economic spheres.

Discussion

A study of the survival of folk traditions in the areas of the Radh region under study entails significantly to keep in mind the importance of the continued existence of religious traditions of the autochthones/*vratyas* even in present times. They constitute the various social groups (tribals, sub-castes, castes/*antyaja* and others ethnic groups), who received special attention to reconstruct the regional religious historical tradition and their survival strategies depended on the geo-physical specificities of their habitation. The trend still continues in recent times and thus, the wooded areas in the plateau region, which has a large concentration of tribal population, with a subsistence pattern of fishing, hunting, etc. differs from the plain regions with an agro-pastoral economy (pastorals including Gop and, agriculturalists including Sadgop and other *antyaja* groups like, Dom, Bauri, Bagdi, Hari and others). The surviving pattern, in time, influenced the cognitive representation, reflected through various religious beliefs and practices in the region. Though the evidences pertaining to folk religious traditions is limited in nature with

a lack of written sources, various archaeological and historical records pertaining to various stages of settlement and economic activities in the region of study provide valuable information about the introduction of different religious beliefs and practices. This is specifically evident from the Historic period onwards and thus, our interpretation about the same may not be necessarily explained by following a specific chrono-cultural sequence, but various archaeological, historical and ethnoarchaeological evidences as mentioned earlier.

The history of the region as well as the oral traditions also speak of the settlement pattern of the region, which saw the rise of local/feudatory powers or ruling authorities in the early medieval times and an influence of trading activities on the local religious traditions as mentioned earlier. The rise of the small royalties between 16th to 18th centuries including, Mallabhum, Gopabhum, Sikharabhum, Dhalabhum, Tungabhum, Brahmanabhum, etc. often led the region to inscribe a local history of its own. Under the local chiefs and rulers, grew a close bond between local inhabitants and royalty, especially with the gradual increase and spread of pluralism from the time of the intrusion of Islam in the region and thereafter the Portugese and the British, binding the independent and semi-independent principalities and the locals together. With particular socio-cultural traits, their sense of homogeneity helped them to bind themselves together inspite of the spread of such religious thought processes like Jainism, Buddhism and Tantric influences, Brahmanism, Saivism or Saktaism and also the liberal Bhakti cult. At various instances, even though the patronised religion of the royalty differed from those of the *vratyas*, the folk ceremonies, festivals and religious ideals survived as an undercurrent throughout history and often merged with the former. Thus, the popularity of folklore of royalty inspiring local/folk deities is still popular amidst the present populace. A similar trend also continued with the *brata-kathas* of the region, including Tusu, Bhadu and others, which could have received the involvement of local chiefs from time to time, but never depended on a royal order to appropriate their significance and existence. Handed down through generations, these beliefs survived through time through a cognitive representation of human civilization, which rendered the region its specific cultural ethos.

A close study of the two major types of folklore, as reflected through the religious traditions in the region of study, entails specific significant features. The very ethos of the lore imparted a sense of distinctness of cultural identities of the autochthones as different from the so-called upper castes of the region. The two distinct categories of lore mentioned in the present paper represent a continuous strain of communication through history, between existing societies and religion, with the aspect of ecology playing a significant role in the diachronic development of

thought processes. As the lore of the tribes establishes their discrete and distinct identities on one hand, those of the scheduled castes establishes their tryst with various historical developments on the other, including the anxieties and apprehensions associated with natural calamities, child-birth and the general processes of agrarian cycles under stringent rules of working as hired labourers in agricultural fields of upper castes. Though a large section of lore concerns the local royalties, the survival of the folk deities as village gods and goddesses as well as the various *brata kathas* also explains their individual attempts to maintain their cultural identities, despite varied religious influences throughout history. Thus, the significance of Siva, Candi and various Sufi saints prevail in the local lore above the royal religion of Vaisnavism in and around Bishnupur in Bankura, or the tribal deities of Burha-Burhi and Marang Buru dominates every festival in and around Susunia hills in Bankura over Vaisnavism, established by local royalty. Closer observation of the oral traditions helps trace historical developments as early as the late medieval times in the region. It is through the survival of these traditions that one can notice a glimpse into a section of historical processes which often lie in oblivion - the communication at the cognitive level.

Though the folklore mentioned above is primarily in sharp contrast to what might have been traditionally considered as 'primary orality', with high technology culture often influencing parts of the new orality, including television, print, radio and other electronic devices, which are often reverted to for the survival of the same, a large part of the primary orality survive amidst the changing fragments. From poems and fables to riddles, *chharas* and *brata-kathas*, as the lore of Radh Bengal explores local and mainstream deities, it establishes a true nature of oral traditions in the process as the indicators of intangible socio-cultural developments of history through verbally transmitting messages and testimonies by the use of speeches, songs, riddles and stories across generations.

Notes

¹ Penchashimul- spelled- Pen-cha-shi-mul. District- Bankura, P.O.- Susunia, Police Station- Chhatna, Block- Chhatna, State- West Bengal. Specific significant information about village festivals include- Eken *puja* (*Paus Sankranti*) as well as the Candi *puja* (7th of *Baisakh*). Both the Eken and Manasa as well as Bhairab *sthans* are in the western part of the village. *Harinaam Sankirtan Chabbis Prahar* takes place for three days in the month of *Caitra* in the village *atchala*. Important *bratas* of the village include Jitastami, Radhastami, Sivaratri, Bhadu and Tusu.

² *Chhara*- a range of poetry which often has its beginning and initiation in the oral traditions of Bengal and mostly have a non-written origin with impromptu expressions of daily life. However, in later times, the introduction of print and still later, the digital technologies have aided in their preservation through time.

It is also noteworthy to mention the contribution of various prominent poets and authors in later times towards the creation of *chharas*, especially for children-rendering a special character to a part of oral tradition and mention may be made of Rabindranath Tagore, Annadashankar Ray, Tarashankar Bandopadhyay and more recent ones including Sunil Gangopadhyay, Leela Majumdar and others.

³ The tree is locally famous in Bengali as *Simul*. The region of study has extensive growth of the tree, especially in regions bordering Susunia, the region of Purulia and Mednipur. The botanical name is *Bombax ceiba*. The available part of the plant, including the roots, gum and the flowers, are used extensively for various products, including paints, various oils and lubricants.

⁴ The Asokan rock edicts mentioned are located in Dhauli near Bhubaneswar and another at Jaugad under Ganjam district in Southern Kalinga region. Speaking about local life, they impart a sense of geographical assertion, that upto a certain extent, helps to visualise the region of former Bengal under the influence of Magadhan empire, especially under king Asoka in 3rd century B.C. (Sen, 1991:16-17). There are also similar inscriptions in the area, close to the vicinity of the present region of work, which also speaks of Buddhism being patronised by Asoka. The Dhauli and Jaugad inscriptions also point to the fact that agrarian festivals existed in contemporary times which corresponded with the modern day festival of *Tusu* (*Ibid*).

About DHAULI (Major Rock Edicts)—The Dhauli inscription has been cut high on a rock in a group of hills which rise abruptly from the surrounding plain. The site has been identified with Tosali which is mentioned by Ptolemy as a metropolis. It was situated near the sacred pool of Kosala-Ganga and thus developed into a religious centre as well. The identification of Dhauli with Tosali is most convincing and is borne out by the text of the 1st Separate Edict which is addressed to the *mahamattas* of Tosali. It seems reasonable that the edicts would be as near the city as possible if not actually within it.

About JAUGADA (Major Rock Edicts, similar to the Dhauli version)—The inclusion of the two Separate Edicts among the Jaugada series would point to its being within Kalinga. It is now a ruined fort in the Behrampur *taluka* of the Ganjam district in Orissa. It is situated on the northern bank of the Rishikulya river. The two Separate Edicts are addressed to the *mahamattas* of Samapa, which was probably the name of the town in the Mauryan period. The area covered by the ruins would suggest that the town must have been a fairly large one, and the presence of the fort might point to its having been a military centre. Its proximity to the sea may have given it the added advantage of trade and maritime activities.

⁵ The region of study has extensive references surviving in present times that suggest an assimilation of thought processes of the religion of the autochthones with that of the various other religious beliefs and ideas that once swept the region through the course of history- with many of them being patronised by local royalty. Such evidences are prominent with the ruins of the architecture of various religious beliefs and ideas being worshipped as local/folk deities across the region. Mention may be made of Parihati in Mednipur, Pakbira in Purulia and along the Kumari-Kangsabati region of Bankura such evidences include Radhamohanpur as well as places like Ambikanagar, Chitragiri, Paresnath,

Rudra and others. All of these regions provided vital information to throw light on the surviving evidences of Jain and Buddhist influences in the region. The field-work also incorporated significant information about the survival of Puranic Brahmanical religious traditions which incorporated various folk traditions within its fold, evident from places like Garraipur, Satpatta, Kechanda and along the Damodar region, such places included Pakhanna, Jainagar, Hatasuria, Barjora, Sarakdihi- which all had influences of Ganga Valley due to its close proximity and the presence of a strong Puranic-Brahmanical tradition within an agro-pastoral group, projecting elements of folk tradition. Thus Saiva influences are seen to survive under the varied names of Siva, including Sarupnarayana, Rupnarayana, Dharmaraj, etc. It is also significant to mention here the prevalence of various regions which also reflected different survival of folk/tribal traditions as well. Mention may be made of such interior places of Purulia, including Ranipukur, Bundwan, or the adjoining regions of Susunia and Chhatna as well as Koro and Dhumkoro and different regions of Mednipur like Shilda, Mohanpur, Satbati and Jhargram.

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